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Corporate Presidents' Group

550 Secret People Meeting in S.F.

By Stephen Hall

CIA director Stansfield Turner, who is in the business of running a secret organization, addressed another secret group yesterday with the innocuous-sounding of Young Presidents' Organization, Inc.

About 550 delegates of the YPO, which describes itself as "an international education association of 3500 corporate presidents," are in town for their 28th annual "university," or convention, at the Fairmont and Stanford Court hotels.

And that, they maintain, is all anyone needs to know about the group.

When advised that a reporter had several questions about the organization, Ron Weintraub, who refused to identify himself while wearing a name tag marked "Educator," snapped, "The answer is, we don't give out any information."

Virtually the same response is given by almost all members of the group, who qualify for the YPO by becoming chief executives of their companies prior to age 40, provided that the companies have annual sales of roughly \$2 million, depending on the type of business.

On the surface, the YPO gathering seems hardly different from an ordinary business convention. Their week of activities includes cocktail parties,

luncheons and a variety of seminars ranging in topics from "Romantic Love: Fantasy or Rational Ideal?" "Investing for Challenge, Fun and, of Course, Profit," according to the daily eight-page YPO newsletter, "Nob Hill News."

But the group is "part of the cream of the corporate crop" in the country and attracts "a lot of names you'd recognize," according to Mike McCaffrey of Newport Beach, who is conducting in one of the seminars for YPO.

Mostly we just cry on each other's shoulders," said one young executive who asked not to be named. "If we don't get together with our peers, we don't have anyone's shoulder to cry on."

"We don't look for any publicity and we don't want any publicity," said Weintraub, who briskly warned against any media coverage of the group.

Weintraub insisted that the organization is "low-profile," but it turns out that the YPO has hired out a private contractor to light up Alcatraz for a special after-hours tour today according to Lynn Strong head ranger for the National Park Service on the island.

And the late afternoon tour, which could be the largest ever for Alcatraz if the promised 900 guests show up, represents a compromise

Originally, the YPO wanted to throw a party on "The Rock," according to National Park Service spokeswoman Ruth Kilday. She said the request was turned down because federal property isn't for rent, and that a party on Alcatraz could be dangerous.

While anyone willing to talk about the YPO stresses its low-profile nature, there aren't many wallflowers among the list of featured speakers. More often, they are found on the cover of newsmagazines.

In addition to Turner — who happened to appear on the cover of both Time and Newsweek this week — the YPO has lined up Robert Bleiberg, senior editor of Barron's magazine, and U.S. Senators Robert W. Packwood (Rep-Ore.) and James Abourezk (Dem-S.D.) for closed-session luncheon talks, as well as a Wednesday morning prayer session with convicted Watergate figure Charles Colson.

Ed (Skip) Ligon Jr., media liaison officer for the organization, said the YPO does not pay speaker's fees for those appearances.

Others scheduled for seminars include Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America; Werner Erhard, founder of Erhard Seminars Training; and Tim Galloway, author of "The Inner Game of Tennis."

The only surprising aspect

of the YPO, in fact, is the reluctance of members to discuss the group. One staff member said the members preferred not to talk for fear of being misquoted or misinterpreted.

But North Carolina dairyman Ben Kilgore, 46, one of the few YPO members willing to be quoted, had another explanation.

"Most businessmen prefer not to speak to newspaper people, period," he said, "whether they're part of this organization or not."

CIA chief Turner may have picked up some pointers from the YPO. Originally scheduled to hold a press conference after his closed-door address to the group, Turner instead left the hotel immediately by a side exit. An aide said he was unaware that anyone from the press was interested in asking Turner questions.